



## **Next Level Programs of Study Frequently Asked Questions**

*The Governor's Workforce Cabinet's Office of Career and Technical Education is launching new Career and Technical education courses in the 2021-2022 school year. This initiative, called Next Level Programs of Study (NLPS), aims to improve the consistency, quality, and intentionality of CTE instruction across Indiana. The following document provides information regarding many of the common questions received throughout the NLPS implementation process. The document will continue to be built out as new questions arise. Questions regarding current content or suggestions for future additions can be directed to [CTE@gov.IN.gov](mailto:CTE@gov.IN.gov).*

*Looking for additional information? You can find a variety of resources on our NLPS resource webpage. A full course list, detailed information about NLPS course sequences, webinar recordings and presentations, course funding details, a comparison of Perkins V pathways to NLPS pathways, and more are available. To access these resources, click [here](#).*

### **Background and Reasoning for NLPS Transition**

- The 2018 reauthorization of Perkins V, the federal law that oversees career and technical education, provided an opportunity to rethink our current CTE system. A significant change in the bill was a new federal definition of a CTE concentrator based on course completion rather than credits earned. The change in definition is particularly significant in Indiana because a CTE concentrator designation is included as a postsecondary readiness competency in Graduation Pathways.
- A team of individuals was assembled by the Governor's Workforce Cabinet at the direction of Governor Holcomb to review the state's CTE system. The action team's review concluded that improvements were necessary in 3 overall areas: consistency, intentionality, and overall quality.
  - **Consistency** - NLPS seeks to increase the consistency of CTE course offerings to ensure all CTE students have the same opportunity to learn essential skills regardless of the location they are taking a course. Our current system makes it possible for a CTE concentrator to earn 4 credits (about 300 instructional hours) at one location but need 12 credits (about 900 instructional hours) at another location. NLPS restructures the current Level 1 courses available under Perkins V into three 2-credit courses to ensure schools and career centers are teaching the same standards regardless of where the program is being offered.
  - **Intentionality** – NLPS directly aligns secondary courses to postsecondary competencies, providing students who have discovered their passion the opportunity to earn more postsecondary credentials and make progress towards postsecondary degrees while in high school.

- **Quality** – New course standards will increase the rigor in many CTE courses and provide greater benefits to students. Students will now see increased opportunities to earn dual credits, obtain postsecondary credentials, and participate in work-based learning experiences. Professional development is being planned to support CTE instructors as they work to include the advanced competencies in their course.
- These three focus areas are a framework for an overall goal of seeing more students that participate in CTE obtain a high-quality credential of some nature along with their high school diploma. This opportunity is significant for students that may not be able to attend college otherwise. The Governor’s Workforce Cabinet and the Office of CTE continue to work collaboratively with other state agencies towards a goal of seeing at least 60% of Hoosiers with a quality credential beyond high school by 2025.

### **Transitioning to NLPS from Current Courses**

#### **Do schools have to transition all CTE program to NLPS for 2021-22?**

- No, 2021-2022 is serving as a soft grand opening for NLPS courses. Schools may choose to not transition until 2022-2023 or can pick and choose which programs of study to transition during the 2021-2022 school year based on what works well for their students.
- During the upcoming school year, schools and career centers are encouraged to only transition students beginning a pathway to NLPS courses. Except in a few limited circumstances, students who have already begun a pathway should have the opportunity to complete their pathways utilizing current courses.
- Considerations:
  - **NLPS has to be used by the class of 2025.** Thus, it may be prudent in pathways that the student typically takes one class per year to have them take the principles course in the 2021-2022 school year.
  - For students in the class of 2023 and 2024, NLPS may provide an opportunity to earn CTE concentrator status in one year instead of two due to the concentrator definition change.

#### **What will happen to pathways where a NLPS is not ready for the 2021-2022 SY?**

- These pathways are under development and Office of CTE staff have been working to align these programs to a credential of value. These pathways will be released in the fall of 2021 and will be available for the 2022-2023 school year. A crosswalk will be developed for schools that enroll 9th graders into currently available courses within these pathways.

#### **What will happen to the current CTE courses and pathways?**

- All CTE courses that are included in the current Perkins V pathways will be phased out, redesigned, or integrated into NLPS by the 2024-2025 school year. **None of the courses will be phased out until 2023-2024 at the earliest.**
- Current courses will remain as they are for 21-22. **Beginning in 2022-2023, current Level I courses that are available for multiple credits per semester will be limited to 1 credit per semester.**

Current Level II courses that are offered for multiple credits will be limited to 1 credit per semester with the 2023-2024 school year.

- **No changes are planned for Introductory and Foundational courses.** These courses serve a valuable role at the beginning of a career pathway and there are no plans to change or phase out these courses as part of NLPS implementation.
- **The Perkins IV pathways, which are based on a student earning 6 credits, will no longer be available after the 2021-2022 school year.** All current Perkins V pathways will be transitioned to NLPS by the 2022-2023 school year. The Perkins V pathways will be phased out as the current courses are phased out.

### **Can courses not on the NLPS list for the 2021-2022 school year be offered by schools?**

- For the 2021-22 school year, a school may offer any course that is listed in the Department of Education's 2021-2022 Course Titles and Descriptions document or in the NLPS Review Document posted on the [GWC website](#).

### **NLPS Course Sequence and Student Progression**

#### **What considerations went into the design of the NLPS courses and sequence?**

- In order to provide greater consistency and adjust to the new definition of a concentrator in Perkins V, each Level I course has been divided into three smaller courses. Each of these smaller courses are two credit, two semester courses. This new structure ensures that each student in the pathway will have the chance to master the same content through the concentrator sequence.
- While NLPS changes the course structure, the number of credits available in each pathway remains at 12.
- To provide greater intentionality, NLPS are aligned to postsecondary credentials whenever available. The programs of study are aligned to relevant certificates available through Ivy Tech Community College and Vincennes University.
- Changes in federal law require program of study to lead students through a non-duplicative sequence that moves from general occupational knowledge and skills through advanced courses that provide more specific occupational competencies. The NLPS sequence meets this requirement and includes all of the technical courses that are required to earn the 30-hour certificate whenever available. Where shorter term certificates are available, the courses required for the CT were included in the concentrator sequence and if needed the first two credits of the capstone course.
- The NLPS sequence has been designed to include the 8-10 technical courses typically required for a postsecondary technical certificate. This required moving to a model that equates 1 high school credit to 3 college credits while meeting contact hour requirements. Therefore, most NLPS courses are aligned to two college courses.

#### **What advice is there for smaller schools who may have trouble teaching all of these classes or offering a wide variety of pathways to students?**

- The NLPS structure represent a hybrid of the Perkins IV definition of a concentrator (earn 6 credits in a pathway) and the completion of at least two advanced courses definition found in Perkins V. **Schools are encouraged to focus on offering high-quality pathways that provide students the**

**opportunity to earn a credential. This may mean offering less overall pathways in some cases. There are several options available to expand current pathway offerings including complementing Career Center/Co-op programs or taking advantage of dual enrollment opportunities.**

### **Does a student have to start a NLPS as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader?**

- **No, a student may progress through a NLPS in a variety of ways.** While there are 4 courses within each NLPS pathway, it does not mean that a student must take 1 class per year of high school. How a student progresses through a NLPS is a local decision and should be based on the pathway and what is best for the student.
- Taking 1 course per year may be optimal in certain pathways, such as Ag, Engineering, BioMed, or Business. In some other pathways, starting the NLPS later and taking two courses in one year may be a more ideal fit.
- When determining when to offer the Principles course, schools should consider a students' readiness to complete associated dual credits. Some students may not be ready to take a dual credit class as a freshman. In these cases, it may be better to have the students fully explore a career cluster by taking an Introductory course their freshman year and wait until their sophomore year to begin a NLPS pathway. Most students would have enough flexibility in their schedule to take 2 courses their Junior and Senior year if necessary.
- Health Science or Welding are examples of pathways which may be better taught in longer blocks of time (2 or 3 period blocks). To facilitate offering courses in this way, a school may co-enroll students in up to 6 credits within a pathway. For example, a student may be enrolled in the Principles, Concentrator A, and Concentrator B course during their junior year and then complete the capstone course for 6 credits their senior year.

### **Can students take only one course in a Next Level Program of Study, such as just the Principles course?**

- Schools are encouraged to only offer the Principles courses when students also have the opportunity to continue in the pathway to the Concentrator A and Concentrator B course.
- Students are also free to take other NLPS courses as elective courses. However, if the student has not met the prerequisite or course length requirements, the enrollment will not be eligible for CTE funding.

### **Are the Principles courses and Introductory courses interchangeable?**

- No, the Principles course for each pathway and the Introductory courses are different courses and serve distinct purposes. An Introductory course offers a broad overview of a career cluster and the main purpose is to help students explore career interests before starting a pathway. The purpose of the Principles course is to provide necessary knowledge and skills for an individual pathway or a select group of closely related pathways. Principles courses are aligned to dual credit courses required for the Technical Certificate (TC) or Certificate of Graduation (CG) at ITCC and VU respectively.
- Principles courses are not eligible to receive CTE funding when offered at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. Additionally, postsecondary providers may not award dual credits to students taking a

Principles course in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

- Preparing for College and Careers, Introduction to Agriculture, and Engineering Essentials are the introductory courses currently eligible for funding at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level.

**Can the Principles course and the Concentrator A course be taught concurrently during the same block of time?**

- No, both courses are aligned to dual credit courses and have required dual credit contact hours. Each course should be taught in a separate block of time or period.

**Capstone Course Information and Purpose**

- The Capstone courses will not be available until the 2022-2023 school year. Similar to current Level 2 courses, Capstone courses will be available for multiple credits per semester.
- Capstone courses have intentionally been designed to have less dual credit and contact hour requirements than the Concentrator courses. Aligning to less dual credits allows flexibility for schools to embed work-based learning opportunities into the Capstone course when possible.

**Can students complete some, but not all, of the dual credit courses in a Capstone course?**

- Schools have the option of offering the capstone for 1-3 credits per semester. The Office of CTE will be identifying priority competencies aligned to the dual credit courses that should be completed first if the course is only being offered for 1 credit per semester. These priority competencies will be selected based upon which courses are required for the CT.
- Courses that are required for the TC/CG, but are only available through dual enrollment, have been placed in the Capstone course. Schools may choose to teach this content without dual credit or work with a postsecondary partner to be able to provide students with the opportunity to complete the courses through dual enrollment.

**Are there benefits or consequences if a student who reaches concentrator status does not take (or complete) the Capstone course?**

- Schools are encouraged to offer at least the first two credits of the Capstone course for students, but there is no penalty if they don't. In many cases the required courses for a short-term certificate will not be able to fit into the concentrator courses and the student will need to take some credits of the Capstone course to complete the CT.
- The Capstone courses have been designed to provide up to 150 instructional hours of embedded work-based learning experiences. This focus means many of the Capstone courses are only aligned to 12 or fewer dual credits. Students are expected to be enrolled in at least two credits of related instruction to take advantage of the embedded work-based learning experiences.

### Can students complete a work-based learning (WBL) course or experience in place of the Capstone course?

- Absolutely. The WBL capstone course will still be available for students and will maintain its current prerequisite of at least one advanced course (a Concentrator A or Concentrator B course).

### What is the Technical Skills Development course and when/how should it be included within NLPS?

- The Technical Skills Development (TSD) course was designed to meet two different purposes depending on the situation.
  - **The first option is to take the TSD course to provide additional instructional/learning time.** This time may be used to provide students with additional hands-on or lab time or intensive work-based learning experiences.
  - **The second option is for situations where a student is participating in a NLPS at a career center but has already completed the Principles course earlier in their high school career.** For example, a freshman student took Principles of Agriculture and then later enrolled at a career center for the Precision Agriculture pathway. The student could enroll in the Technical Skills Development course in place of the Principles course, alongside enrolling in one or both of the Concentrator courses. This will also provide students the opportunity to earn the dual credit for the Principles course if they did not earn the dual credit their freshmen year.
- The course allows students to earn 2 elective credits (does not count for concentrator status) and the course is funded at \$300 (introductory level).
- To use the TSD course, students must be concurrently enrolled in either a Concentrator A and/or Concentrator B course. Schools should use course code 7156 for enrollments in the TSD course.

### Teacher qualifications

#### What are the teacher requirements to teach NLPS courses?

- Required secondary teacher credential requirements are summarized in the Assignment Codes from the Department of Education, updated in February 2021. This document is available on our [NLPS resource webpage](#). As much as possible, assignment codes for current courses have been aligned to their NLPS counterparts to ensure current instructors can teach the NLPS courses.
- Additional requirements may be needed to teach some courses for dual credit. Assignment codes don't equal credentialing requirements for dual credit, those requirements are determined by ITCC and VU. The state does not expect nor are we requesting for these requirements to be lowered.

#### Will secondary teachers receive professional development for better understanding the NLPS? Could this be done in collaboration with the appropriate VU and/or ITCC personnel?

- Office of CTE staff held several instructor webinars in April of 2021. A recording of one of those webinars is available [here](#). The webinars focused on helping instructors better understand NLPS and start developing strategies for transitioning to the new standards.

- While the capstone courses may include higher level content that has not been traditionally included in the programs, the majority of the content/standards for the concentrator courses is already being offered for dual credit courses.
- ITCC and VU are both eager to help instructors with these dual credit courses. ITCC has offered to allow their teachers to use their course shells and both schools have had representatives participating in the standards development process. Because of the direct alignment, we expect the professional development aspects of dual credit to only increase and become a critical part of the NLPS.

### **Funding**

**Many of the new competencies/standards require students to use equipment or software. Will the state help pay for any material costs schools are unable to cover?**

- Through the federal Perkins Grant and the additional tuition support for CTE programs, the state of Indiana invests over \$150 million dollars every year to help cover the costs of CTE programs. Additionally, schools were eligible for persistence funding (1.5 times the Level 1 funding amount) for enrollments in Level 2 courses for the first time in the 2020-2021 school year. Schools are discouraged from offering programs that they are not fiscally able to support with the appropriate facilities, equipment, and materials.
- Where possible, the Office of CTE will provide grant opportunities to help schools transition to NLPS. Examples include the \$600,000 that was distributed to the 12 schools piloting an NLPS during the 2019-2020 school year and more recently, the \$500,000 made available to CTE districts to support NLPS implementation.

**Will any funding be available to help support industry certification exams since that is a focus of NLPS?**

- The GWC is working on a plan to distribute \$500,000 (\$200,000 from state funds and \$300,000 from Perkins Leadership funds) to at least partially cover the costs of industry certifications on the Graduation Pathways list. Additional details will be available in the fall and will be announced via our bi-weekly update.

**Will schools still receive funding if they offer only one or two courses in a NLPS program of study? (e.g. Principles course only or just a Concentrator A/B course)**

- The NLPS courses will follow the same funding rules around course requirements that were established for the 2020-2021 school year including meeting prerequisites and course length, and any required hands-on, in-person instruction.
- A student who has not completed the Principles course may take a Concentrator A or B course for elective credit. However, because the student did not meet the prerequisite requirements, the enrollment would not be eligible for CTE funding.
- NLPS are designed to give students the opportunity to earn concentrator status and to earn credentials while they are in high school. Offering only part of a pathway does not provide this opportunity to students. Thus, schools are strongly discouraged from offering a Principles course without at least offering the corresponding Concentrator A and B courses for at least one pathway.



- The Office of CTE will be instituting a digital monitoring system during the 2021-2022 school year which will be used to monitor course requirements and measures of program quality. Examples include dual credits, credential attainments, and the number of students who participated in a WBL experience for each program at each school.

### **Dual Credit**

#### **Are all NLPS courses eligible for dual credit?**

- Whenever possible, NLPS courses have been directly aligned to postsecondary programs and courses and are available for dual credit. However, there are courses within a few pathways (i.e. BioMed and Engineering) that are not aligned to any postsecondary courses.

#### **Do courses have to be taken for dual credit to count for concentrator status?**

- No, concentrator status is only determined by completion of the secondary course. We understand that it will be difficult for some schools to offer each course for dual credit. However, dual credits and credentials earned are high quality outcomes that provide great benefits to students and schools should do all that they can to take advantage of the alignment to postsecondary.

#### **How can schools meet all of the contact hour requirements that must be covered in order for students to earn Ivy Tech and/or Vincennes University dual credits?**

- The required contact hours have been taken into consideration when deciding which postsecondary courses could be paired together to create a secondary course. The standards development steering teams, made up of secondary and postsecondary instructors, are verifying that there is enough time available to meet the required hours. Schools may also choose to use the Technical Skills Development course to provide additional time to meet these requirements.

#### **If schools have dual credit agreements with colleges/universities other than VU or ITCC will they have to change those relationships?**

- The Office of CTE and the Commission for Higher Education continue to work with public institutions around the state to discuss the role they may play in NLPS. Our goal is to develop a process and criteria that would allow the 4-year public institutions the opportunity to align their courses to NLPS courses which would give schools more options in choosing postsecondary partners.